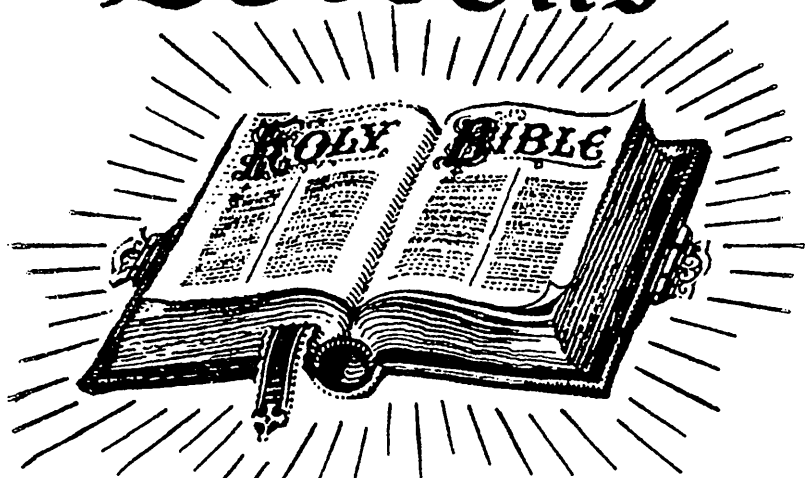


1987

# Bible Lessons



**"Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord,  
we are CHANGED . . . ." II Cor. 3:18**

**ADULTS -- YOUNG PEOPLE**

Vol. 18, No. 3  
July, Aug., Sept.  
1986

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# Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People

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Jesus Christ and His Church  
Edited by Leslie C. Busbee and Wayne Murphey

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## Theme for Third Quarter, 1986

Having faith and confidence in God and standing on the word of His promises is such a vital ingredient and key to successful spiritual life and Christian warfare. Let us now have a series of studies on this important subject. We feel greatly inspired to set forth this series of Bible Lessons dealing with the faith of the saints of old as recorded in sacred history of the Holy Bible. I believe that we will be inspired to greater faith and that we will gain a clearer aspect of the workings of the faith of these ancient men and women who left a good testimony of God's favor and goodness even in the sorest trials and most heated conflicts. Beginning with the creation and Abel, we will examine the structure and detail of the faith and stability of these children of God that helped to give them a place in holy antiquity. As we view this panorama of the redeemed in ages past, let us bear in mind that their faith can and must be imitated in our hearts and lives today. They had their experiences of faith in times when unbelief and opposing powers worked hard against them. It will be the same with us. Since sin entered into the world there has always been contrary forces working against faith and obedience to God. It is for us to arm ourselves with the determination that, by God's help, we can and will overcome all the foreign powers that be enemies to our faith and trust in God, the purpose of which is to save our souls.

—Brother Leslie C. Busbee

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July 6, 1986

### FAITH, THE WORKINGS OF GOD'S CREATION

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

2 For by it the elders obtained a good report.

3 Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

2 And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

3 And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.

7 And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so.

9 And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so.

11 And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth, and it was so.

14 And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years:

15 And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so.

Job 26:7 He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing.

Psalms 33:6 By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.

7 He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses.

Jeremiah 10:12 He hath made the earth by His power, He hath established the world by His wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion.

13 When he uttereth his voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens, and he causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; he maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures.

**Memory Verse:** By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. Psalm 33:6.

**Central Thought:** Everything earthly, literal, and material has its basis upon and sprang from the Word and Spirit of God. The faith of God's people is a reliance and trust upon that same unfailing Word, bringing to pass changes and progress that are beneficial to the soul and glorifying to God.

**Word Definitions:** *The worlds were "framed":* thoroughly completed and adjusted. *The earth without form and "void":* empty. *The Spirit of God "moved":* moved gently, brooded. *Firmament:* expanse or open place in the middle of the waters. *Discretion:* intelligence.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

The heavens and the earth are such an orderly directed mass of substance and action, that it is folly to think that it is all a matter of pure chance. Every aspect of creation bespeaks wonderment and marvelous workings that can only be attributed to a God of order, love, wisdom, and strength. How wonderful that we can look upon nature and ourselves and be aware that an Almighty Being of love and wisdom has brought us forth! The basis of our being and the existence of all things seen rests in the unchanging Word of God. Think of the shapeless void, the chaos, the confusion and absence of order, and the darkness that prevailed before God created this habitable world! No light, no warmth, no air, and no place was found. There was nothing to stand on, there was nothing to discern and understand. It was no fit place for life or existence. But God was there and the Word of Life was there. The Spirit of God went forth, brooding, studying, planning, and designing. Oh, the power of creation, the creation of God! First came the Light. Spiritual light and warmth began to pervade the realms of space. God's Word brought it forth; a glowing, illuminating, penetrating energy which prepared for what followed. Then came the expanse, an opening in the midst of the chaos, a space in which to move and to breathe. See the lower section shaping into a large globe from which emerges shapes of land, dry land, for feet of living creatures to tread upon. Look up and see the sun beginning to shine forth, and as it goes down beyond the brow of the earth, see the stars twinkling and the fair moon shedding its soft rays. What brought all these wonders and those that followed forth? The Word of God made them all possible, the same Word that we rely upon today!

—Leslie C. Busbee

### QUESTIONS:

1. What were all things seen made out of?
2. Why is the truth of the creation hard for the carnal mind to grasp?
3. How is the material world being created by the Word of God a matter of faith?
4. Was the world created without forethought and design?
5. What caused it all to come forth?
6. What were the lights in the heavens placed there for?
7. What is the earth hanging on today?
8. Is there any room for us to doubt God and the power of His Word?

9. Has the Word of God changed, and will it be any different when the heavens and the earth pass away?

### **ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS**

How precious to know that we can rely upon God's Word today! His commandments are to be obeyed because they are true, unfailing, and right. His promises are to be obeyed and believed because they are true, unfailing, and right, also. We ought to obey God's commandment in every aspect of life and responsibility, and we ought to believe His promises just as readily as we obey. This is faith. To base our confidence or assurance upon conditions, circumstances, appearance, or literal substance is to base our faith upon something that is not solid, but like sinking sand. Here we can find understanding of the workings of faith. The worlds were framed by the Word of God through faith. The Word of God spoke, and it was done. When the Word of God comes to us in commandments, promises, precepts, or laws, it must have the same effect as when He spoke the world into place. However, with us there is a will and a volition that must be exercised. With the literal creation there was not a will. Everything obeyed the Word of God without choice. But in us there must be a will and a definite decision to believe and obey the Word of God. Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. Romans 10:17. We are to give attention to the gospel and to the Word that comes through the gospel. As we give a listening ear, and incline our hearts toward God, the Holy Spirit begins to brood over us, and faith becomes inspired. We are persuaded that His Word is true. We believe and act upon it from the depths of our hearts. We hold fast in the time of contrary forces and opposing powers. We cleave to His Word and promises despite all contrary evidence. Until He sees fit to bring the promised blessing to reality we will believe and stand fast on His Word. This is faith, and we are challenged in these latter days to have and maintain this faith through this short life.

—Leslie C. Busbee

### **FOOD FOR THOUGHT**

What great power there is in the Word of God. We feel a great sense of accomplishment when we create a little project with our hands. Man has done some wonderful creating with his intelligence, but how insignificant his work is compared to

God's creation. Just by speaking the word the genesis of all things was established.

Note the power in God's word. Not only did it create the heavens and earth, but II Peter 3:7 says, "But, the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." It is the power of God that keeps this 6,000 year old universe in its orbit. It is also the same word that will make the earth melt with fervent heat.

It is the Word of God that creates a new heart. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." I Peter 1:23. The Psalmist said, "For thy word hath quickened me." This is something that only God can do. Man can no more do this than he can create the universe. God's great power will reach to the lowest sinner and create a clean, pure heart within; a heart that knows love instead of hate.

Just as the Word of God preserves the order of the universe, it also preserves the soul from sin. "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." Ps. 119:11. "Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." I Peter 1:5. How much does our faith take in? In order to please God we must believe in the power of His Word.

—Wayne Murphey

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July 13, 1986

## UNBELIEF — THE CAUSE OF MAN'S FALL

Genesis 2:7 And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

15 And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.

16 And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:

17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

21 And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof;

22 And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.

3:1 Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

2 And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden:

3 But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.

4 And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:

5 For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

6 And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat.

7 And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.

II Corinthians 11:3 But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

**Memory Verse:** For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. I Cor. 1:21.

**Central Thought:** Doubting God's Word and promise caused Adam and Eve to disobey Him and partake of the forbidden fruit. This spirit of doubt and unbelief has passed on to all men and can only be overcome by true repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Word Definitions:** *To dress and keep (the garden):* To serve, attend, till, or cultivate, and to guard and protect. *Subtil:* cunning (especially in a bad sense). *Simplicity in Christ:* the pureness, clearness, singleness, and sincerity in Him.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

God took a morsel of earth and shaped it into a man. His Spirit was breathed into that form and he became alive. Man



was created by the Word and Spirit of God. Man is still created that way. Psalm 139 expresses that God oversees the formation of the babe in the womb and writes in His book our substance beforehand. This means that we are all planned, and that God governs what we are and what we are to be. Since we exist through the virtue and strength of the Word of God, how earnest should be our desire to let the Word of God have free course in our lives. God is a communicative God. He speaks and makes known His mind and will. He clearly made known to Adam the bounds of His pleasure. He limited man's scope of life by forbidding him to partake of one tree. This tree was rightly named the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Man knew only good before he sinned. Everything was good and pure. Even the nakedness of their bodies suggested no evil or wrong. Satan worked through the serpent to cause a doubt and a question to come into their minds concerning what God had spoken. This is the way he works today. He works through our natural appetites, how things appear, and he also draws through the self attachment, the desire for pre-eminence and to be noticed. To believe God is to exalt His promises and keep out of sight. Paul expressed it very well in our memory verse. The world by wisdom lost the knowledge of God. Man lost sight of the value, importance, and benefit of God's Word. He cut himself from that solid mooring and drifted out upon a sea of doubts, fears, strife, worry, and unbelief of every fashion. Would we regain this lost estate? We must come back to His precious Word. This Word through the gospel is preached unto us. I Peter 1:25. As Eve gave ear to the sermon of the devil and gave heed to it, so must we turn our ears to God and the message He is giving to us now. We must believe and obey the whole Word of God.

—Leslie C. Busbee

### **QUESTIONS:**

1. How was the Word and Spirit involved in the creation of the man?
2. What were the things that the Word of God conveyed to man? What were his duties, his bounds, his privileges, his blessings, and his joys?
3. What power was used to make the woman out of the rib?
4. What was Eve's attitude toward the Word of God when Satan first approached her?
5. What was her attitude after listening to the devil's talk?
6. Is there any danger of us listening to the wrong voice today?

7. What were the three things that helped Eve to make up her mind to eat of the forbidden fruit?
8. Do we have these three factors to contend with now?
9. How was unbelief the cause of the fall of man?

### ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

It surely pays to have respect to and fully believe the Word of God in every one of its aspects. His commandments we must obey, His promises we must believe, His precepts we must follow, His statutes conform to, His law regard and submit to, and His truth love and cherish. We will prosper in our souls if we will maintain a holy and ardent love for the Word of God. The Word of God is to instruct, guide, direct, keep, and sustain us in the right way. If we will keep a love for the truth we will be kept from the delusion of the devil. Eve was doing all right until she listened to that little half-minute speech of the enemy. And it so appealed to her flesh, her self-betterment, and to the sight of the tree. She just resolutely reached out with all confidence that she was doing what was best for her. Satan still works that way today. We can be raised up from childhood to love, respect, and obey the Word of God, and then let one of Satan's gentlemen come along with his smooth talk and carnal reasonings. In a few minutes he can tear down everything that has been built up in the heart and mind. In place of those eternal values he has a cheap, shoddy (yet glittering and shiney) substitute of fleshly thrills and attainments which in the end will spell doom and separation from God. The danger is still there. Stand free from the devices of Satan, young people. Satan is still on the job, and his main import is to dull your mind from the Word of God and what it teaches. He will get you listening to anything else. And think of the price that we pay for disregarding the Word of God! It is not worth it! I am sure that Eve mourned over and over for listening to the devil. Let us be wise and stand fast on the Word of God. Believe it, regardless of all the evidence that Satan through the flesh and this old world can bring before you.

—Leslie C. Busbee

### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The familiar verse, "Where there is no vision the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he." is certainly applicable to our lesson today. It is because people become neglectful and lose a vision of God and His purpose that man

sins. When the serpent tempted Eve with the fruit of the forbidden tree, she momentarily fell into a state of unbelief. The desire for the forbidden was stronger than the belief that God would bring punishment upon her. The enemy was very crafty in turning her eyes away from the simple commandment of God.

"But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." II Cor. 11:3. The enemy would love nothing more than to get our minds confused as to what is right and what is wrong. Just as there was a simple rule of obedience established in the garden, living for Christ today is composed of a simple devotion to Him. He has clearly established in black and white, a lifestyle of righteousness. If the enemy can confuse and overload our mind with what is required of us, the next step will be to make us wonder just what God will punish. This leads to unbelief.

In order to live a happy life of belief in God, we must acquire a vision of what He is requiring of us, keep this clear vision and don't allow the subtilty of Satan to alter it.

—Wayne Murphey

—o—

July 20, 1986

## THE FAITH OF ABEL AND THE WAY OF CAIN

Hebrews 11:4 By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.

Genesis 4:1 And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord.

2 And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.

3 And in the process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord.

4 And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering.

5 But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.

6 And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?

7 If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.

8 And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.

9 And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?

10 And He said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.

11 And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand.

I John 3:11 For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.

12 Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.

Jude 11 Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core.

**Memory Verse:** We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not. I John 5:18.

**Central Thought:** He who sincerely and humbly trusts in the Lord and obeys His Word has often become an innocent victim of the jealousy, anger, and hatred of those who are void of the grace and favor of God.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

Although the Bible affords no definite information thus, it is evident that Adam and his family were instructed of God to pray to Him, give Him thanks, and to offer up sacrifices for a gesture of repentance to obtain mercy from the guilt of their sins. Although God expelled Adam from the garden of Eden, he was not completely separated from His mercy. No doubt Adam and Eve prayed and sought God's favor and taught their children to do likewise. The Jewish historian Josephus gives an interesting account of the two sons of Adam, adding that they also had daughters. "Now the two brethren were pleased with different courses of life: for Abel, the younger, was a lover of righteousness; and believing that God was

present at all his actions, he excelled in virtue; and his employment was that of a shepherd. But Cain was not only very wicked in other respects, but was wholly intent upon getting; and he first contrived to plough the ground." Cain's offering of the fruit of the ground lacked the faith in the future coming Messiah, or Christ, which the offering of the first born of Abel's flock typified. But Cain's offering also was rendered from a wicked heart of covetousness and greed. Cain's reaction to being rejected only showed his ugly spirit even more. Being the older brother, he was humiliated to be bettered by his younger brother. God's reasoning with him was fair, even assuring that he still had a chance to recover. Adam Clarke brought out that the word "sin" in the expression "sin lieth at the door" is used in more than a hundred different places in the Old Testament to mean "a sin offering". In other words, a sin offering could still be had for him to offer from his brother's flocks. But Cain had an entirely wrong attitude. Josephus further informs us that, after killing Abel and being expelled from God's presence, Cain only increased his wickedness, aiming to procure everything for his own bodily pleasure, being injurious to his neighbors. He became rich by rapine and violence, leading men into wicked courses. He introduced a change from the way of simplicity wherein men lived before; and was the author of measures and weights. Thus was the way of Cain: covetousness, jealousy, murder, robbery, and more covetousness. —Leslie C. Busbee

#### QUESTIONS:

1. From the information in our text, can you explain why Abel's sacrifice was more acceptable to God than Cain?
2. Where did Abel's faith manifest itself?
3. From whence comes the anger and hatred in the heart of the evil man for the righteous?
4. Has this kind of scene pictured in our lesson ever occurred again thereafter?
5. In what way did Abel speak after his death?
6. In what way does the righteous yet speak after being taken from the earth?
7. Will the great length of time and multitude of years lessen the surety of the reward of faithful Abel?
8. How can one avoid going in the way of Cain and falling into such a pit of evil?
9. If Cain would have had true love for his brother, what different story would we have on record?

## ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Our hearts are touched as we think of dear faithful Abel in his earnest outreach for God and His blessings becoming the victim of ruthless anger from the heart of his proud brother. Such a situation has been repeated over and over. Men down through the years have persecuted and sought to destroy the upright. But, oh, how blessed it is to be a lover of righteousness and a follower of God like Abel was, even though it means our physical destruction! Abel's faith sustained him through it all. Every man has charge of his own destiny. Cain did not need to be wicked. He could have quelled the evil of his heart had he but willed to do so. God would have helped him. He had the same opportunity as Abel had. He could have still been the leader of the family in righteousness. But he made the great mistake that many of our day are making. Instead of applying their hearts to righteousness, they give way to the lusts and desires of the flesh and to the evil influences around them. Instead of stemming the tide of worldliness to strive for holiness and acceptance with God, their weakened character conforms to the world and drifts along with everyone else in that downward way to destruction. Jesus said few there be that find the way of life and many there be that go into the way of destruction. The story of Cain and Abel holds a bold lesson for us today. It is up to our own will which one of these men in their example we will follow. Those who steadfastly choose to go God's way and the way of faith and obedience secure for themselves eternal dwelling in that blessed world to come. Their lives do not end at death. Their voices continue to speak even after they are gone. Let us remember faithful righteous Abel and seek for grace to be in that number who will receive the great inheritance of the faithful.

—Leslie C. Busbee

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Anger is a cruel thing. There is no justification for Cain to have become angry. He could have obtained the blessing of God the same as Abel, through obedience. Perhaps one condition that added to Cain's frustration was the system under which he lived. It was customary for the oldest son to receive the birthright from the father. This included a blessing from the father which conferred many privileges upon him, along with great respect from the household. This is the position that Cain was entitled to, and yet Abel, his younger brother,

was receiving the most blessings! In Genesis 4:7, God told Cain that if he would live without sin at the door, he could fill his place of having the rule over Abel. As Cain talked with Abel about this, anger overcame him and thus is recorded the first instance of murder. Envy caused anger which motivated killing.

Carnal anger is not a credit to the profession of Christianity. When a craftsman of limited training was seen often at the discussions in the Academy, a friend asked if he understood Latin, the language of the intellectuals. "No," said the craftsman, "but I can tell who is wrong in the argument." When asked how he determined this, the craftsman said: "Why, by seeing who is angry first."

Perhaps you wonder then at what Christ did to the money changers in the temple. In connection with that, consider what Aristotle said. "Anybody can become angry; that is easy, but to be angry with the right person, and to the right degree, and at the right time, and for the right purpose, and in the right way; that is not within everybody's power and is not easy."

—Wayne Murphey

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July 27, 1986

### ENOCH'S FAITH AND HIS SPECIAL REWARD

Hebrews 11:5 By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

6 But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

Genesis 5:21 And Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah:

22 And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters:

23 And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years:

24 And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.

Jude 3 Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

4 For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

12 These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots;

13 Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.

14 And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints,

15 To execute judgment upon all, and convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.

16 These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage.

**Memory Verse:** Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. Jude 21.

**Central Thought:** Enoch overcame all the pressures and oppositions of his age to prevail with God through His faithfulness, and walked so close to God that He was pleased to take Enoch out of the world without the usual way of death.

**Word Definitions:** *Translated:* transferred, transported, changed sides. *Common salvation:* salvation that is needed by all and shared by all. *Lasciviousness:* without control or discipline.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

Adam Clarke has some very worthy observations in his commentary that I would like to give in a condensed form here. The name Enoch (Chanack, Heb.) signifies: to instruct, to initiate, to dedicate. From his subsequent conduct we are authorized to believe that he was early instructed in the things of God, initiated into the worship of his Maker, and dedicated to His service. Under this divine influence from God and parents, his mind got that sacred inclination which led him to



act so distinguished a part through the course of such a long life. He walked with God (the Hebrew word meaning "he set himself to walk with God"). He was fixedly purposed and determined to live to God. In consequence of receiving the righteous education and the Divine influence through it, he determined to be a worker with God, and resolved to walk with God, that he might not receive the grace of God in vain. He was a patriarch, the king, priest, and the prophet of a numerous family, to whom he was able to administer justice, among whom he was to perform all the rites and ceremonies of religion, and teach, by precept and example, the way of truth and righteousness. Also, he was a married man and had numerous children, proving that marriage is no hindrance even to the perfection of godliness. Being cleansed from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and having perfected holiness in the fear of God, we find not only his soul but his body purified, so that, without tasting of death, he was capable of being translated to the paradise above. He attained this spiritual excellence in a time when there were, comparatively speaking, few helps and no written revelation. If Enoch attained such a high plane of godliness in his day through his faithfulness and devotion to God, how much more it is possible now through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

—Leslie C. Busbee

### QUESTIONS:

1. Why was Enoch translated that he should not see death?
2. What two things must we be persuaded of if we would come to God?
3. Is it possible for us to walk with God today?
4. Can we walk with God without strict diligence and holy discipline?
5. What is meant by the term "the faith once delivered to the saints"?
6. What are the dangers that Jude is pointing out to us?
7. What does Enoch's property indicate about some of the people of his time?
8. Knowing somewhat of human reaction and behaviour, how did the people respond to the evidence of Enoch's translation?
9. What kind of testimony did Enoch leave with the people?
10. What is the desire of your heart concerning this?

## ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

It took much diligent effort, much humility and prayer, watchful words and actions, meek and lowly attitudes, wise and just deliberations, self denial and patience—all this and much more to enable Enoch to reach the extent of Divine favor that he enjoyed. He pleased God. What more or better things can be said of a person? If God is pleased with a person, everything else will be all right. We included Jude's warning as part of our lesson today because of the quotation he had from the old records of Enoch's prophecy of the second coming of the Lord and the judgment. Enoch was the seventh from Adam. Along with Peter, Jude issued the warning concerning the apostacy that was coming among those who professed to be children of God. Jude's warning is similar to that given in II Peter 2. Although Enoch gave this prophecy so many centuries ago, we know that the fulfillment is sure to come. It is a warning to us today. Let us strive to please God with all of our hearts as Enoch did. Let us avail ourselves of the grace of God that is available to us in the fullness of Christ. If Enoch did what he did in his time, how much more can we do and how much farther can we go now! We can please God if we will apply ourselves to wisdom and to His precious Word. We must believe that God is. Oh, young people, do not ever doubt the reality of God! The Hebrew name Jehovah refers to the declaration of His being. God told Moses that His name to the children of Israel was to be I AM. He said, "I AM THAT I AM." The Septuagint renders this phrase: "I AM THE BEING." If we can really be persuaded that God is, it will impel us toward our devotion and faithfulness to Him. He not only exists, but He has proven Himself to be a rich rewarder of all who diligently seek Him. While we are young and unincumbered with the burdens of life we should seek the Lord with all of our hearts. He is just waiting to show Himself strong to all who will do this.—Leslie C. Busbee

### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Enoch left a real example for us to follow. We need to have the same testimony; that we please God. As Enoch walked with God, he just seemed to abound in faith and walked so closely that he finally walked right into God's presence. We have an assurance of what his latter end was and we have the privilege and promise of being ushered into the presence of God someday also.

When we read of saints of old such as Enoch, there is a tendency to set them up on a pedestal in our mind. We imagine them as something more than human. However, they were simply men who had personal battles and faced times of discouragement. James 5:17, in speaking of Elijah, who also did not see death, declares he "was a man subject to like passions as we are." The important aspect of their lives was their faithfulness to God. Their faith would not turn loose of the God they served.

Jude describes men who are quite a contrast to Enoch. These men would attend the feasts of charity which the Church held, but they were outright sinners. These events were so abused by those who were given to gluttony that finally the feasts were stopped. Jude draws an analogy of these men as being twice dead. This would indicate that they were at one time dead in their sins and trespasses and God quickened their spirit to life. However, they lost the Spirit of God out of their lives and returned to the dead state of sin. This verse alone should effectively put to rest the doctrine of "once saved-always saved."

There is coming a day when God will call all things into judgment. All those who have been ungodly will be fully convinced of their sins. There will be no excuses offered nor any justifying of one's self. How glad we will be, if on that day we bear the testimony of Enoch, that we please God.

—Wayne Murphey

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## WILKINS

When Hunt and Cobbett were England's heroes, almost worshipped by millions, and greatly feared by thousands; when "the cause for which Hampden died on the field, and Sidney on the scaffold," was printed on our milk-cups, butter-plates, banners, and pocket-handkerchiefs; when white hats, turned up with green, constituted the patriot's badge of allegiance to liberty and midnight meetings; when Tories believed that England's death-knell was tolling, and Radicals that her sun of hope was just rising; then Wilkins, the subject of this Tale, was a strong and active man. The excitement of the times led all parties into the most ridiculous follies; the pulpits warned the people against politics and demagogues, and mob meetings warned them against tyrants and parsons. Extremes always beget extremes, and Wilkins was one of the

extreme men of that day. Had any one proposed that all parsons should be hanged, Wilkins would willingly have provided the rope.

The doings of any age can only be judged correctly by the light of that age. Wilkins, no doubt, believed he was doing what would secure his country's freedom; but he fell into the snare that has entangled thousands, he began reforming on the wrong side of the door; the world *within* was neglected for the world *without*. He could shout for a nation's reform, while he neglected to reform himself. The stump orator could find in him a seconder, and he was always ready to take the chair for the infidel lecturer. He was one of a large circle of free-thinkers; and freely and bitterly did they both think and speak against any one who dared to think differently from themselves. Some of them declared it to be impossible that any man thinking the Bible true could be a free-thinker; free thinking consisted in thinking as they thought, and thinking nothing else.

One of these worthies once tauntingly held up a purse filled with silver, and sarcastically quoted part of one of Wesley's hymns,—

"This, this is the god I adore,  
My faithful, unchangeable friend."

Several years after, a friend informed me that this same man was in great poverty; he had never been married, lived alone, was in very poor health, and in great destitution. I had considerable respect for him, and, on calling to see him, playfully asked him if his god was still alive. He instantly remembered the purse and the two lines of the hymn, and smilingly replied, "No, no; he is dead long since; I wish he was not; but I am not the first that has worshipped a money-bag."

Another refused a book I wished to lend him, observing that he "wanted neither me, nor my books, nor churches, chapels, Bibles nor parsons." It was about two o'clock, one Sunday afternoon; he was scraping a calf's foot with a rusty knife: he had a week's beard on his face, a week's dirt on his shirt, clogs that seemed never cleaned, and trousers covered with various colored patches. The house, the wife, the children, all indicated anything but domestic comfort.

"Well," I replied, "I admire your frankness; you hoist your colors at once. I expect you are one of the men that 'want more pigs and fewer parsons.'"

"You have just hit the mark," was his answer.

"Well, sir," I said, "but observation convinces me that men of your creed, or rather no creed, have rarely either pigs or parsons; and I have also observed that godliness, as a rule, gives a man the advantage and pleasures of this life; it has given to millions a comfortable home, a good character, a good suit of clothes, respectability, a place in God's house, a happy mind, and glorious prospects." Then turning to the wife, I added, "Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_, suppose that your husband was a religious man, that you were well dressed, as you see nearly all that go to church or chapel are, leaning on your husband's arm, and your children neatly attired, walking on before to the house of God, how would you like it?" With a good hearty laugh, she turned to her husband and said, "Harry, I should like to try." Harry and I subsequently became good friends; he now reads my books, and has got new trousers.

Many such as the above were amongst Wilkins's *free-thinking* acquaintances, when I first knew him. He had a sort of leadership amongst this class of men; he was superior to them in intellect, and in better circumstances; he was an extensive reader of infidel works and "ultra" newspapers; talked large, scoffed at religion, and boasted that for thirty years he had never entered either church or chapel. How it was that I became so anxious respecting this man's salvation all at once is to me inexplicable, except on the Bible principle, that God's Spirit does move human agency to effect His purposes.

On one occasion, when Wilkins was passing down the street, a co-worker in the school and church, Mr. Thomas Schofield, called my attention to him, observing that he supposed he was a strange character, and wondered if it was possible to get an interview between him and our mutual friend Mr. Molineux. I at once saw the possibility, and believed it was my duty to do what I could to get them together. Feeling considerable confidence in the result, I went at once to Mrs. S\_\_\_\_\_, one of Mr. Wilkins's married daughters, and requested her to propose the matter to her father; she was amazed at the idea, and, in evident surprise, asked if I did not know her father's principles.

"Yes," I answered, "but if you propose the thing to him in as agreeable a way as you can, perhaps you may succeed better than you expect."

"Well, but if he gets angry with me, as I am certain he will, I shall have to lay all the blame upon you."

"Very well; I will cheerfully bear all consequences, whatever they may be," was my reply.

Mrs. S\_\_\_\_\_ went to her father's house that night, and told him the strange request that I made, and, as she expected, he was greatly offended. The following day he called at my shop, and demanded why I had presumed to speak to his daughter respecting him, and whether I supposed that he was incapable of judging for himself in matters relating to his own welfare.

I saw he was greatly irritated, and knew that much depended on the next minute. I handed him a chair, requesting him to be seated, offering, at the same time, to take his hat and walking-stick. He took the seat with evident reluctance, but refused to give his hat, and held the stick in a manner that indicated a wish on his part to use it.

I at once confessed that I had requested his daughter to speak to him; told him how the thought had arisen; that I had known him ever since he was chairman at a lecture given by the notorious infidel, Carlisle, of Sheffield, in the old playhouse; and that having been a victim to the paralyzing influence of scepticism, I could feel for others carrying the same yoke. Here he interrupted me by sharply asking if I "wished him to be pestered with some young upstart that would cram damnation down his throat."

"No," I replied, "the man I wish to introduce to you is both a gentleman and a scholar. You have read much, are acquainted with some of the sciences, and know something of speculative philosophy; and, religion apart, I think he is just the man to gain your highest esteem. If you wish to talk with him on geology, he will give you the strata from the primary, transition, secondary, tertian, to the superficial; if on astronomy, he will dilate on that wonderful science from Mercury on to Uranus, with satellites, comets, etc.; if on botany, he will give you the names of flowers and plants, with their Latin names and English derivations, almost from the cedar on Lebanon to the hyssop on the wall. He has also travelled a little, and knows something of human nature; and if you want to have your book-knowledge well rubbed up, he is just the man for you."

While I was speaking, Wilkins smiled, and observed, that he "thought I was a painter in more respects than one; that he should like to see the man I had so eulogized, if only through a telescope; and, if he would leave out his religious twaddle, he might call upon him when convenient, but only on that condition."

"Well, then, I will undertake to see the gentleman, and frankly tell him of your wish and terms. I have no doubt the compact will be honorably kept on his part, but I expect you will break it yourself; for you have been so long under the impression that you could prove all parsons fools, *par excellence*, that you will be trying your hand upon him."

"Parsons! parsons! is the man you have been speaking of a parson?" exclaimed Wilkins, with evident astonishment.

"Yes, sir; he has long been in the ministry, but at present he is not a travelling preacher; being, however, extensively known, he is still in great request as a preacher; and though he is sixty-seven years of age, I would have you be on your guard, for he is an adept in stenography, and will be able to take down your words as you speak them."

This last sentence was spoken in a playful manner; nor could I help laughing outright on seeing Wilkins's embarrassment, on discovering that the gentleman with whom he had promised to have the meeting, was a minister; and seeing, also, that this fact appeared to him somewhat to alter the state of the case, I offered to liberate him from the contract, providing he wished it.

"No, no," was his answer; "let him come, let him come; you know the terms—no religious cant. If the bargain be kept, I shall be glad of his company; and if he breaks the compact, he will not catch an old bird with chaff."

(Continued on page 41)

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August 3, 1986

## THE FAITH OF NOAH, PART 1: God's Call to Noah

Genesis 5:32 And Noah was five hundred years old: and Noah begat Shem, Ham, and Japeth.

6:1 And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them,

2 That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose.

3 And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.

5 And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

6 And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.

7 And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.

8 But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

9 These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.

13 And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth.

14 Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch.

15 And this is the fashion which thou shalt make it of: The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and height of it thirty cubits.

16 A window shalt thou make to the ark, and in a cubit shalt thou finish it above; and the door of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof; with lower, second, and third stories shalt thou make it.

17 And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die.

18 But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee.

22 Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he.

**Memory Verse:** By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. Hebrews 11:7.

**Central Thought:** Noah took advantage of the favor God showed him in His warning and instructions for survival from the promised destruction, and, through obeying God's Word, escaped and preserved the human race, leaving a wonderful testimony of faith for us today.

**Word Definitions:** *Gopher wood:* It is generally under-



stood that this was cypress wood. *Pitch*: a coating of bitumen, or a tar-like substance. *Cubit*: the general understanding of a cubit was 18 inches, the measurement from the elbow to the tip of the middle finger. However, the more ancient measurement of a cubit has been said to equal about 22.86 inches. *Window*: The Hebrew word for "window" indicates a light, or that which is clear or bright. It is a different word from the ordinary word for window. It evidently refers to a lighting system and also a ventilation system.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

Josephus tells us that the sons of Seth continued to esteem God as the Lord of the universe, and to have an entire regard for virtue for seven generations, but in the process of time they forsook their godly ways. In accord with our lesson's text, Josephus says that they began to company with women and begat sons that proved unjust. "But Noah was very uneasy at what they did, and being displeased at their conduct, persuaded them to change their dispositions and their acts for the better: but seeing they did not yield to him, but were slaves to their wicked pleasures, together with his wife and children, and those they had married; he departed out of that land. Now God loved this man for his righteousness."

The society sunk to low levels of wickedness and affront to God through the influence of ungodly men and women going after their bodily lusts instead of the will of God. The things that God had given man to enjoy with His blessings got out of hand. But Noah, by his close walk with God and righteous life, was given the warning of what God was about to do. God could have miraculously delivered Noah and his family, but He wisely chose rather to give Noah a work to accomplish for his salvation, a type of the faith of Jesus Christ that we are to develop and work into our lives today. —Leslie C. Busbee

### QUESTIONS:

1. What does our lesson show to be one of the factors that helped bring about the awful condition of Noah's time?
2. Is it possible for God's Spirit to cease from striving with men?
3. How did God feel about the condition that mankind had gotten themselves into? What did He purpose to do?
4. What did God speak to Noah about?
5. What did He command Noah to do?

6. What were the dimensions of the ark?
7. What did God say for Noah to make in the ark?
8. What was the purpose of the ark?
9. How did Noah respond to God's call?

### ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

God purposed to destroy the world because of their wickedness, but purposed also to save Noah and give anyone a chance to be saved who so desired. When we consider the great magnitude and heavy task it was to build such a gigantic structure all through the faith that he had in God's promise, we are filled with challenge and wonder. It is evident that God was giving Noah plenty of time to accomplish this giant task. When God said, "His days shall be an hundred and twenty years", He probably was expressing the amount of time that He would let all this wickedness go on. I Peter 3:20 speaks about the longsuffering of God which waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a-preparing. II Peter 2:5 called Noah, the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness. The spirit of man was in the prison house of sin and unbelief. They were captivated by the world and the carnal side of life. Noah preached to these people during the time when he and his sons were building the ark. Their faith was strong and unwavering. Perhaps they might have grown weary of the long and hard task they were working on, but they kept in mind what God had spoken and warned them of. It fully possessed their hearts and minds. Otherwise they could not have gone through with it all and accomplished the will of God. No doubt the people jeered at that old weird man and the folly of that great ark positioned out there on dry land. We have no way of knowing just what all they had to suffer, but knowing human nature and how the ungodly will react to the works of faith, we are sure that they suffered a plenty. But they went right ahead and finished the job. This is a great lesson to us today. We have promise that God will help us as we go forth, building ourselves up on our most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keeping ourselves in the love of God. It will be worth it all to escape the destruction of this world and to be able to stand before the Son of God in that day.

—Leslie C. Busbee

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Faith will bring about action. A belief in God will cause us to obey His Word. Noah really believed God when He said that He was going to destroy the world. He had nothing temporal to base this faith on, as the world had never suffered destruction before. In spite of that, Noah went to work. We don't know if Noah was a carpenter, but his faith in God caused him to set himself to the task of being one.

Jonah had his faith strengthened and it caused some action. The Lord instructed him to go down to Nineveh and deliver a message. Jonah displayed some unbelief in God when he thought that he could run away from his task. After God finished dealing with Jonah, he had such a belief in God that when the word of the Lord came to him the second time, he wasted no time in heading toward Nineveh.

A faith in God will also cause us to do our Saviour's bidding. When God lays something upon our hearts, we will do it. A Church that is full of faith will be an active Church. The people will be anxious to further the kingdom of God. If we could realize the full impact of being eternally lost, it would inspire our hearts more to work at getting people into the ark of refuge, which is Christ Jesus. —Wayne Murphey

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August 10, 1986

### THE FAITH OF NOAH, Part 2: He Enters the Ark

Genesis 7:1 And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation.

2 Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female: and of beasts that are not clean by two, the male and his female.

3 Of fowls also of the air by sevens, the male and the female; to keep seed alive upon the face of all the earth.

4 For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth.

5 And Noah did according unto all that the Lord commanded him.

9 There went in two and two unto Noah into the ark, the male and the female, as God had commanded Noah.

11 In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second

month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.

12 And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights.

13 In the selfsame day entered Noah, and Shem, and Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife, and the three wives of his sons with them, into the ark.

16 And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him: and the Lord shut him in.

17 And the flood was forty days upon the earth; and the waters increased, and bare up the ark, and it was lift up above the earth.

19 And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were covered.

23 And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth: and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark.

Luke 17:26 And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man.

27 They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.

**Memory Verse:** The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished. II Peter 2:9.

**Central Thought:** The long hard task of building and preparing the ark was finally finished, and, after Noah and his family and the designated animals were all safely inside the ark, God shut the door and turned loose the flood of waters that destroyed everyone else.

**Word Definitions:** *"The fountains of the great deep were broken up."* This refers to waters from the oceans, loosed from their bounds by God's decree, which came flooding onto the lands. This source of water combined with forty days and nights of incessant rain was abundantly sufficient to cover the whole earth.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

It is wonderful to note that God said, "Come thou and all thy house into the ark." He did not say, "Go thou into the ark." He said, "Come thou", which meant that the Lord was in the ark. His approval was upon Noah and all that he did. God had given command for a spacious ark to accommodate the animals, also, that He desired to save to preserve seed upon the earth. We are certain that Noah was given Divine assistance from God in the great task of getting those animals into the ark. At any rate they all got in. It appears in the text that Noah and his human family went in first into the ark and the animals "went in unto Noah into the ark." They did not have to drive them in. God was with him in this great event. It appears that on the same day that Noah and all the passengers were safely entered into the ark the flood waters began to come. Can you think of a down-pour like what we call today a "cloud-burst" lasting not one hour, or one day, or one week, but for nearly six weeks, day and night? A two-hour cloudburst can make flash floods that will do much damage. But here is a downpour that went on day after day. Some of us have seen the ravaging effects of a flood. Places that were thought safely out of the reach of normal overflows can be flooded if enough water comes in such an amount of time. Try to imagine the reaction of the populace as the tempest broke upon them. No doubt they wept and plead desperately for mercy. But it was too late. Let us remember that all of this is a figure of an event that will soon take place when the Lord comes again. It will mean everything for us to be in the ark of safety, which is the grace of God in Jesus Christ, in that day. How glad we will be when the heavens are on fire and we see the Lord coming in the skies, that we have made the right preparation.

—Leslie C. Busbee

### QUESTIONS:

1. What did God say to Noah when the ark was at last ready?
2. Why did God want the animals in the ark?
3. How much time did God give Noah to get everyone safely inside the ark?
4. Did God forewarn Noah just how long it was going to rain?
5. In what year, what month, and what day did the flood come?

6. How long did it rain?
7. How were the people kept from breaking into the ark?
8. Did the ark float?
9. Was the earth entirely covered by the flood?
10. Did the people of Noah's time believe Noah's message?
11. How does this fix their responsibility?
12. How are we responsible concerning the destruction of the world which is soon to come?

### **ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS**

At last Noah's faith and confidence were rewarded. Think of the excitement and emotional trauma that filled their hearts and minds as they entered into the ark, probably in sight of the jeering throng! "The Lord shut him in." Think of those words! The Lord will shut us in, too. He will close out the world and shut us in unto Himself. We are to be in Christ. To be in Christ means to enter into His salvation through faith and obedience to Him. We are in His favor and well pleasing. We are in the center of His will. We are in the scope of His rule, protection and care. We live each day with His mind and pleasure in view. We are in Him and He is in us! As the storm continued to rage outside and they began to feel the ark being moved and lifted by the waters, oh, how they must have rejoiced and praised their wonderful God! How we rejoice when we begin to see more and more the decay of this world and the folly of sin around us; we rejoice that we are in Christ, the ark of safety. Gladly did they go about their tasks of cleaning, caring, and giving food for the animals. Oh, that we would look at this story of Noah as something more than just an interesting story! Think about the reality of it! It was their faith and confidence in God that enabled them to do all of this. It is the same today. We have the message from the gospel that the world will one day be destroyed by fire, the fire of God's wrath and indignation. We must believe this warning and move with the fear of God upon our hearts to give ourselves fully to Christ and take up our cross and follow Him. If we will do this faithfully, the day will come when we will be so happy that we did make our start for the Lord. We are happy now, but in that day of judgment our joy will know no bounds.

—Leslie C. Busbee

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Mr. Webster defines an ark as, "a small chest or coffer; the repository of the covenant or table of the law; the large floating vessel in which Noah and his family were saved during the deluge, hence a place of safety or shelter."

The size of Noah's ark, I suppose, would have been large as compared to the size of ordinary vessels in those days, but actually when you consider that the future of the entire world was confined within its bounds, it was really quite small. God used it to transplant life from the anti-deluvian world to the world that emerged from the flood. The ark was the vehicle that preserved life from one age to the next.

Later on God instituted a means of spiritual life for mankind by virtue of His law which He prescribed for man to follow and the law was housed within an ark or small coffer. The container itself was not really so important, but it was the law it sheltered that radiated power and wisdom, etc., yea, all the promises God made to His people showered out over His people through the agency of His law. When they failed to observe God's law, the blessings ceased and when they repented and turned back, the blessings began again. The ark of the covenant reached down to Christ when He came with a more perfect law, embodied within Himself, which He not only taught and explained to the people, but which He actually lived out in living example. Radiating out from Him to the needs of all the people came the fullness of the Godhead bodily. Complete deliverance from all sin, ability to continue free from sin, power to live holy, righteous, acceptable lives in His sight comes from Him. He also bestowed a brighter hope of eternal life. The ark of His law, the coffer that housed it—His body—He gave to be bruised, broken and destroyed as a sacrifice for you and me that we, too, might enter in through Him and be partakers of the blessings both now and forever! Thus He is the ark that preserves life from this world to the one to come.

—C. W. Wilson (Written in 1969)

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August 17, 1986

## THE FAITH OF NOAH: The Voyage of The Ark

Genesis 7:24 And the waters prevailed upon the earth an hundred and fifty days.

8:1 And God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark: and God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters assuaged (went down) . . .

3 And the waters returned from off the earth continually: and after the end of the hundred and fifty days the waters were abated (decreased, or gone down).

4 And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat.

5 And the waters decreased continually until the tenth month: in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, were the tops of the mountains seen.

6 And it came to pass at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made:

7 And he sent forth a raven, which went forth to and fro (going forth and returning, Heb.), until the waters were dried up from off the earth.

8 Also he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters were abated (getting lower) from off the face of the ground;

9 But the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him into the ark, for the waters were on the face of the whole earth: then he put forth his hand, and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark.

10 And he stayed (waited) yet other seven days; and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark.

11 And the dove came in to him in the evening; and lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf plucked off: so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth.

12 And he stayed yet other seven days; and sent forth the dove; which returned not again unto him any more.

13 And it came to pass in the six hundredth and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried up from off the earth: and Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and, behold, the face of the ground was dry.

14 And in the second month, on the seven and twentieth day of the month, was the earth dried.

15 And God spake unto Noah, saying,



16 Go forth of the ark, thou, and thy wife, and thy sons, and thy sons' wives with thee.

**Memory Verse:** For evil doers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth. Ps. 37:9.

**Central Thought:** The exercise of faith and obedience to God brings difficult times to us which require much patience and quietly waiting on God for His deliverance.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

I can remember how deeply touched and stricken in mind I was when I first realized by studying the story of Noah that this family along with all these animals were in the ark for over a year. From childhood the forty days and forty nights seemed to be the extent of the time of the voyage to me. I did not comprehend that this month and ten days were merely the duration of the downpour and flooding process, and that there was a long waiting for them to finally get out of the ark and resume normal life again. Yes, it was a whole year that Noah and his family lived in the ark, escaping the destruction of that world back then. The time could have been longer had it not been for the wind that God caused to pass over the earth, hastening the vaporization and the waters to go down. A warm wind can cause a lot of moisture to vaporize off of the earth at an astonishing rate. Upon the mountains of Ararat (in what is now called Armenia) the ark finally was lodged. Very substantial reports have been made that the ark has been sighted in this century. It has been reported that in 1917 a Russian airplane pilot in one of the early aircraft was flying over the mountains of Turkey when he sighted a long dark object. After returning from his flight, he reported this and the report came to Czar Nicholis, who immediately ordered an expedition to investigate. The expedition was a success. The ark was found and the men actually entered into the ark. They said that it contained many rooms of various sizes. The reports were lost during the revolution that took place soon after. For some reason God has not allowed the modern age to have access to the ark which seems to be now encased completely in ice. But we need not see the ark to believe. We know that the Bible is true. God did destroy the earth with a flood and saved just Noah because of His faith and obedience to God.

—Leslie C. Busbee

## QUESTIONS:

1. What caused God to remember Noah?
2. How did God help the waters to go down?
3. When did the ark come to rest?
4. How did they know that the earth was soon to be fit for them again?
5. How long were they in the ark?
6. What did God tell Noah to do?
7. How did patience have her perfect work with Noah and his family?
8. What can we expect along the journey of life if we will walk by faith and obey the voice of the Lord?

## ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

God's all-seeing eye was upon that precious ark with its precious human cargo! He saw that the terrible flood had accomplished its purpose. For five months it had prevailed over the earth, fully eliminating any survival except those in the ark. The sojourn in the ark was not a pleasure trip or honeymoon for the couples. It was sheer responsibility, hard work, faithful endurance, and making the best of things. They wanted to please God and escape the destruction of the world, and their voyage in the ark and all of the inconveniences that did go along with it was part of their consecration. There was nothing to do but do their very best and make out with what God had allowed them to have. No doubt they got anxious and very tired of being cooped up in that ark. I cannot imagine any murmuring or complaining, however. I am persuaded to believe that they were all so thankful to have been spared from the wrath of God poured out in the flood that they wasted no breath murmuring about any of the number of inconveniences that they might have had to bear. It is the same way with us who are walking by faith today according to the counsel of God. Living for Christ does bring inconveniences and hardship at times. We have to wait, wait, wait upon the Lord. We have to wait, wait, wait, on people. It's bear, bear, bear, and forgive, forgive, forgive, and endure, endure, endure. Just when you think things are going to level out into fair skies and easy going, you had better look out and prepare for difficulty. This is the life of a Christian, one who is walking by faith and not by sight. No matter what the difficulty or inconvenience met up with, in the Christian life we can be assured that it is all good for us or the Lord would not permit it to be.

—Leslie C. Busbee

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Noah went through a long ordeal. If you have ever been sick enough to have to remain indoors for a week or so, you will have a small understanding of what Noah probably felt like aboard the ark. No wonder he anxiously sent forth the raven and the dove to check for dry land. Although Noah was anxious to get out of the ark, it is a credit to him that he had patience. It is no discredit to be anxiously ready for things to change, but it is commendable to have patience. Patience is bearing without murmuring. Once a woman did a big washing and hung it on a line to dry. The line broke and the washing fell into the mud, but she didn't complain at all. She did the washing all over and the second time she spread it on the ground. That night a dog walked over it with his muddy feet. All she said was, "Isn't it funny, he didn't miss a piece." I think all of us could relate to a feeling of needing much patience in such a situation.

While Noah was being patient, everything was still operating under divine order. The lion didn't devour the goat, nor was the food supply exhausted. While we are exhibiting the godly characteristic of patience we need to keep a consciousness that God is still in control of circumstances. It takes faith in God to wait on Him.

—Wayne Murphey

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August 24, 1986

### GOD'S COVENANT WITH NOAH

Genesis 8:18 And Noah went forth, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him:

19 Every beast, every creeping thing, and every fowl, and whatsoever creepeth upon the earth, after their kinds, went forth out of the ark.

20 And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

21 And the Lord smelled a sweet savour; and the Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every living thing, as I have done.

22 While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.

9:1 And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth.

3 Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things.

9 And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you.

11 And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth.

12 And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations:

13 I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth.

14 And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud:

15 And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.

16 And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth.

**Memory Verse:** For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. Isaiah 54:9.

**Central Thought:** The faithfulness of a child of God to the will and purpose of God is a dear and sacred treasure to the heart of Him, and as a reward for this faithfulness God personally makes a covenant of promise that reaches far into ages of eternity.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

The natural explanation of the formation of the rainbow does not dim the lustre of the significance that it has with God and what the Word tells us here in our lesson. When sunlight shines through the raindrops that are falling, the rays of light are separated into the various colors and are seen as an arc with the ends on the earth. When there has been a heavy shower of rain and the sun comes out in the west before the rain is quite finished, the effect is a beautiful rainbow in the east. It is really an awesome experience to behold the beautiful

rainbow. One can make a rainbow by spraying water in sunlight. God has had His way in producing this effect. What a sacred time it was when the family of Noah were permitted to set their feet on dry ground again after being in the ark for over a year! How thankful their hearts were to God! It was just right and natural for Noah to want to build an altar and worship the great God who had so graciously spared their lives! God promised to not curse the ground any more, that is, He would not add to the curse. Although He was not sorry for what He had done, yet, the Lord promises to do it no more like that. We know that, according to the New Testament, the earth will be destroyed by fire, but never again would water come and destroy the earth with a universal flood. The rainbow is a token, that is, it is a sign or reminder of this covenant. And God is faithful to His word. Our memory verse is taken from a precious part of Isaiah's prophecy that is dealing with salvation in Christ and the New Testament Church. It compares Noah's covenant from God with the promise of mercy and love from God in Jesus Christ forever. This is a great comfort to our hearts. As we believe God's promises and stand on His precious Word, we receive the covenant of His grace. And I like to think that the token of His covenant is the cross of Jesus Christ, by whom (as Paul expressed in Galatians 6:14) the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

—Leslie C. Busbee

### **QUESTIONS:**

1. What was in Noah's worship and sacrifice that smelled sweet to God?
2. How did it cause God to feel toward His creation?
3. What did He do to Noah and his sons, and what did God tell them to do?
4. What did He promise never to do again?
5. Is there any similarity in His covenant with Noah and the covenant He makes in Christ for us today?
6. What was the token that He gave of His everlasting promise to Noah?
7. Can you think of any token that God gives us today of His grace in Christ?
8. Did God say that there would never be any kind of flood on the earth?
9. What did this covenant mean to Noah and his family as they started out to build their lives anew?

## ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Galatians 6:9 encourages us to "not be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." Sometimes we as mortals are tempted to become weary of the works of faith that God is calling us to. We have to overcome that temptation, and rise up in the name of Jesus and walk by faith this narrow and difficult way to Life. We cannot expect to be accounted worthy of eternal life if we do not walk by faith while we are here in this present life. Many relish the thought of heaven and eternal joys that await us there, but are unwilling and sluggish in bearing the responsibility that is required. We must walk by faith, and not by sight. Had Noah gone by how things seem or appear, he would never have built the ark. We have to go right against the tide of human opinion and how things look. Noah moved with fear. It was a fearful thing to do what he did. It took courage, hard work, and fierce determination. It took staying with it year in and year out. Steady and unwavering confidence in God and what He had promised was the key to his victory and success. So it is with us today. Let us look upon this story of Noah and remember that our faith in Christ to obey His Word and do His will is just as important and serious. We are building an ark today, not of gopher wood, but an ark of holy love and obedience to God. We are to bring the materials through prayer and daily feasting on the good things of God. We are to overcome all the influences from other people who are blind to what we are doing. The unbelief of the world around us must have no bearing upon our souls. I fear that there are many people who are drawing back in unbelief unto perdition. In Revelations 21:8, we have a list of people who will have their place in the lake of fire. The fearful and the unbelieving head the list. Let us embrace our responsibility of faith and work at it with all our hearts.

—Leslie C. Busbee

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Perhaps you have heard stories of soldier boys, who upon arriving back in the United States would kneel down and kiss the soil. They had survived the dangers of war and this country represented life and freedom to them. They felt great gratitude and thankfulness to be home. These are probably some of the same emotions that Noah and his family felt as they stepped off the ark onto solid ground. How privileged they must have felt to be the sole survivors. No wonder Noah

set about building an altar unto the Lord. This was pleasing to God and so he made a covenant with Noah. Love reciprocated from one to another.

Today we are still profiting from that covenant. Don't ever let anyone persuade you that the saints have no effect upon the world. The children of God are the salt of the earth and the greatest pleasure that God derives from humanity. Saints are a preserving force and as they please God, He pours out a blessing that the world in general benefits from.

—Wayne Murphey

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**August 31, 1986**

### **THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM Part 1: The Call of Abraham**

Genesis 12:1 Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:

2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:

3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

4 So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.

5 And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.

6 And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land.

7 And the Lord appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the Lord, who appeared unto him.

8 And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord.

9 And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the south.

10 And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went

down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land.

Hebrews 11:8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise.

10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

**Memory Verse:** Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him. Isaiah 51:2.

**Central Thought:** Abraham, in obedience to the command of God, left all and trusted God to guide and provide for him, believing the promises of God concerning his offspring and the coming Redeemer.

**Word Definitions:** *Tabernacles:* tents, movable dwellings. *Builder:* designer and founder. *Maker:* mechanic, constructor, worker. *Sojourner:* a by-dweller, one who resides but is a foreigner.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

It is evident that God had first called Abram while he was yet in Ur of the Chaldees. In Acts 7:2, Stephen relates: "The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charan (Haran), and said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee." He went on to explain that God removed Abraham from Haran to Canaan after his father died. Haran, his older brother, died in his native land, Ur of the Chaldees. Abram took into his care Lot, the son of his deceased brother. Josephus has some wonderful things to say about Abraham: "He was a person of great sagacity [keenness of discernment and soundness of judgment], both for understanding all things and persuading his hearers, and not mistaken in his opinions; for which reason he began to have higher notions of virtue than others had, and he determined to renew and to change the opinion all men happened then to have concerning God. He was the first that ventured to publish this notion that there was but one God, the Creator of the universe; and everything that contributed to



the happiness of men was according to His [God's] appointment. He taught that all nature in the earth and the heaven moved according to God's commandment, to whom alone we ought justly to offer our honour and thanksgiving." Josephus adds further that because of these doctrines the people of Mesopotamia raised a tumult against him, so he thought fit to leave that country, and, at the command and by the assistance of God, came and lived in the land of Canaan. So we see that there was a reason for God singling out Abram and calling Him. Abram was open-minded to light and truth. He was very keen-minded and perceptive. And he was willing to express and maintain his convictions regardless of opposition. Thus God counted him worthy of the heavenly calling to begin a seed from which would eventually spring the Saviour of mankind.

—Leslie C. Busbee

### QUESTIONS:

1. What did God command Abram to do?
2. Where did He tell him to go?
3. In what way were all the families of the earth to be blessed?
4. How old was Abram when he left Haran?
5. What did the Lord say about the land of Canaan?
6. What are some of the aspects of Abram's faith shown in obeying God up to this point?
7. Did Abram know where he was going when he left Haran?
8. Why did Abram not possess the land of Canaan?
9. How could the land of Canaan be his, and him not permitted to possess it?
10. In what way was he looking for the city whose builder and maker is God?

### ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Abraham was first called Abram. Because of his conviction concerning the truth of God, God saw fit to visit him in a very special way and call him from all influences and associations of this world to a life of faith and trust in God. Isn't this exciting to think about? Away back there in the early days of time God was able to comb through the ranks of sinful man and find a man that would qualify for His purpose. He found Noah and called him for His purpose then. And now He needs a man through whom He will start the great nation through which will spring the Messiah. Finding Abram, as He did with

Noah, He gave a specific command. Instead of building an ark, He simply commands Abram to leave his home and father's house, and go. He did not tell him where he was going. And Abram was so persuaded that God was God, that he obeyed and went out, not knowing where he was going. He was willing to be a sojourner and a pilgrim in the land that was spoken to be his own. His move, his willingness to let God choose his lot, and his submission to be a stranger—these things made up the beginning of this man's wonderful faithfulness to God. Abram was a worshipper of God. He builded an altar unto God everywhere he lived. He called on the name of the Lord. And when the famine got bad in the land, he relinquished the land of promise to God, and journeyed south to Egypt. Do we need to know everything before we will obey the Lord? Do we need to know the whys, the wheres, and the whats? No, we do not need to know all these things. Do we have to have the fulfillment of our desires and prayers right now? Are we willing to wait on God's proper time? Are we willing to have it in faith and not in sight or feeling? Do we want to live in the city of our own pleasure, or are we willing to look for and await the city which God will make for us? The answers to these questions will determine the degree of our faith and trust in God.

—Leslie C. Busbee

### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The knowledge of God had almost perished from the world, and the call of Abraham was a spiritual revival. It was a fresh starting place in the religious history of mankind. He had a divine call, and to obey, he gave up all that was dear and precious to him in the world. He gave up country, home, friends, and entered upon an untried path, committing himself to unknown chances. He could not have made such a sacrifice without a sufficient reason. Abraham acted upon a real communication from God and not from an impression. The "word" of God alone has power. Flesh and blood could not have revealed this to Abraham. The history of the Church confirms the fact that the call of Abraham was Divine. The early Christians submitted to persecution, even unto death, because they knew that the alleged facts of their religion were true. The Church of today had an origin in the dim past, sufficient to account for the fact of its existence. The blessings which the Church of God enjoys, and still enjoy, throughout all time are the blessings which God promised to Abraham.

The Apostle Paul said, "Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. . . . That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith . . . And if ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise." Gal. 3:7-9, 14, 29. Today we are under the blessing that was promised to Abraham, and we are children of Abraham.

I want to be among that number, of "a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues," which "stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands," which is spoken of in Rev. 7:9. They will be children of Abraham in that last great day. I want to cry with them, "with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." (verse 10). Before we can join that multitude we will have it said about us, "These are they which came out of great tribulations; and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (verse 14). —M. Miles

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## WILKINS

(Continued from page 21)

Those who know Mr. Molineux will at once acquit me of having said too much respecting his general attainments. God in His Word, and God in His works, were themes on which he could dwell to the instruction and edification of his hearers. I thought him just the man for the work in hand. The following day I made him acquainted with all the circumstances of the case, and was glad to find that he entirely agreed with the conditions; he promised to call upon Wilkins on the following Wednesday afternoon.

They met at the time appointed, and by an agreement betwixt themselves, arranged for a weekly interview. Being two intelligent men, they had no lack of interesting subjects. For several weeks the conversation was on botany and politics, and, just as I expected, Wilkins was the first to break the terms of agreement. He asked Mr. Molineux what he thought

of the evidences of the existence of a great first cause. The question opened up a subject, the collateral bearings of which would necessarily include internal, as well as external evidences. Their opinions respecting some of the evidences did not materially differ; but when Wilkins declared that he could not reconcile the many absurdities and contradictions found in the Bible with the belief that it emanated from an infinitely wise Being, such as God must be, Mr. Molineux replied, "Have you found the absurdities and contradictions in your own reading of the Bible, or in books written against it?"

"O, in books written against it. I have never read either the Old or New Testament myself, thinking it a pure waste of time to do so," replied Wilkins.

"Well, but if you refuse to read the Bible itself, in order to judge impartially, you should have read books in vindication of its truth and consistency," observed Mr. Molineux.

"Yes, perhaps, I ought; I have often boasted of thinking for myself; but in regard to the Bible and its teachings, I have allowed its acknowledged enemies to think for me. If, however, you have any books that profess to explain its absurdities and contradictions, that are worth reading, I should be obliged if you would lend them to me; and, as the New Testament is a small book, I will at once read it carefully through; but I have never been able to make anything of your Jesus, as you call Him, nor do I expect to do."

Mr. M. furnished Wilkins with Newton's and Simpson's Key to the Prophecies, and other works, such as he knew would answer; and, in the mean time, Wilkins, as he had promised, began to read carefully the New Testament, making notes as he proceeded. While seeking for contradictions and absurdities, he found what he was not seeking, and what he was not expecting to find. He found that the Word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword; he saw that, if what he was reading was true, he was a lost man; he found the truth crowding on his soul with such telling power that he could not sleep in his bed; and he found himself on his knees in the dead of the night, bathed in tears, groaning for mercy, agonizing for pardon, beseeching God for Christ's sake not to send him to hell, not to cut him off in his sins, not to turn a deaf ear to the brokenhearted sinner, but in mercy to spare him, in mercy to blot out his transgressions.

In this state of mind he came to my house, requesting a private interview. How different was this visit from the one he paid me about two months before! Memory and conscience—a

guilty conscience—were working with a crushing power; the events of his past life distressed and appalled him. His confessions, then and afterwards, were such as prudence would cover over with a veil of charity; he was greatly troubled on account of having been the cause of others imbibing infidel principles. One case he mentioned as peculiarly distressing:—A dying acquaintance, whom he visited in his last hours, begged Wilkins to send for some good man to read the Word of God and pray with him. Wilkins called him a fool; told him to die like a man; and refused either to send himself for a praying man, or allow others. “O Wilkins, Wilkins!” said this wretched, miserable being, “Christians do not die as I am dying; this will never do; I do not now believe that death is an eternal sleep; I wish I could believe it; we have often called it a leap in the dark, and now to me it is dreadfully dark. You have often quoted Pope: reverse his dying Christian’s address to his soul, and you have my wretched condition:—

“Hark! the fiends infernal say,  
‘Come, lost spirit, come away.’  
What is this absorbs me quite,  
Steals my senses, shuts my sight,  
Drowns my spirit, draws my breath?  
O, ’tis death, eternal death!”

These words were amongst the last the dying man uttered, and the scene now passed afresh before the mind of Wilkins. With tears streaming down his face, he confessed that if he had read the Testament with candor thirty years sooner, he should have been a different man. On leaving, he took hold of my hand and said, “Mr. Ashworth, I do believe God could pardon my sins, but He never will.”

At a subsequent interview he was more calm, but spoke with great force of the want of principle and virtue amongst infidel writers; greatly deploring his past life, and wishing he had earlier read the Bible and thought for himself. In this Wilkins was right; if infidels would remember that God’s Word enjoins upon all men to “prove all things, and hold fast that which is good,” and would compare the teachings of the Bible with the lives of those who have despised those teachings, many of them would be astonished at the company in which they are found. Voltaire and Rosseau both lived in open adultery; yet these are gods amongst infidels. Paine was a drunkard and a swearer; Hobbes, Wharton, Shaftesbury, Woolaston, Chubbs, Bolingbroke, and Rochester lived strange

lives, and were consistent with their own teachings. But an immoral teacher of Christianity would be condemned by his own creed. Voltaire confesses that "though the ministers of the Gospel oppose each other in their dogmas, in morality they are all agreed."

The iron had entered into Wilkin's soul; the crushing consequences of infidel principles came upon him with all their force; and he now stood before me a miserable, broken-hearted man. I advised him still to read on as he had begun; to examine for himself; to get as much as possible into private, and pray for the Holy Spirit's guidance, not doubting but he would find mercy.

"Yes," he exclaimed, "but how am I either to read or pray with any hope of pardon? The thing seems to me impossible. O, sir, the fearful results of my teachings are more and more terrible as I now see them! I have already given great offence by allowing Mr. Molineux to come to see me. I have sown the dragon's teeth in my family, and now they mock all my attempts to induce them to re-consider their position; they sneer at me for reading the Bible, and declare their determination not to be frightened by religious bugbears."

And this was true: the family did all they could to prevent his intercourse with religious men. Mr. Todd, one of Wilkins's neighbors, a good old Christian, hearing of this, offered Wilkins his sitting-room, promising to read and pray with him fifty times a day, if he wished it. Wilkins gladly embraced the offer, and spent a considerable portion of his time in Mr. Todd's house; and there the venerable old Christian, and penitent weeping publican, together read God's blessed Word, and together bowed the knee at the throne of grace.

One evening Mr. Todd, at Wilkins's request, came to ask me to spend the evening with him, if I possibly could spare time. It was a memorable evening; he had copied from the Bible many passages that seemed to destroy all hope that a man such as he was could ever expect to have forgiveness; he read them to me with a trembling voice. I met all his objections by one answer,—“He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him.” I held him fast to that one point,—“able to save to the uttermost.” He begged me to kneel down and pray for him; we, all weeping, fell down before our Maker; but how different the cause of our tears! Mr. Todd, the hoary-headed saint, wept for joy at the prodigal's return; Wilkins wept tears of sorrow and contrition, and before I could utter one word, he exclaimed, ‘O, Jesus, Jesus, Lamb of God,

have mercy on me! O, Jesus, Jesus, how I have scorned and despised Thy very name, scorned and insulted Thy servants, mocked at Thy sufferings and death!—yet Thou was wounded, bruised, and afflicted for me; Thou didst die on the cross for me; Thou didst shed Thy precious blood for me, for me, for me! O, Jesus, Jesus, Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world, have mercy on me! Lord! I would believe; help Thou my unbelief. I know I have sinned in heart and life millions of times; but is there not mercy? Is there not mercy? O Lamb of God, have mercy on a poor guilty man!”

That night was to Wilkins a night of great bitterness. He spent the most of it in strong cries and prayer. He wept and sought, and at last found the grace of God through a crucified Redeemer. And O, the joy that sprang up in his heart when he found that his deeply-stained, guilty soul was washed in the blood of the Lamb! For days he was in ecstasies. Praise, nothing but praise night and day—“Praise the Lord,” was his continual theme.

On our first interview after his conversion, Wilkins took hold of my hand, and, with an earnestness that astonished me, exclaimed,—“O how happy I am; the blood of Christ can save a million worlds—He has saved me, the chief of sinners. By faith I saw Him nailed on the cross for me; in my heart I believed He died for me—that His blood was shed for me; and if Christ could save me, He can save any man out of hell! I have had more real peace since I became a child of God than I ever possessed in all my days of sin.”

At a subsequent interview, he told me that he had been troubled on reading the passage, “We must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ, to give an account of the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or bad.” “If,” said he, “this be true, what must I do? My life has been spent in the service of Satan; I am now getting old, and I cannot do much for God in the time that remains. If we must be judged by works, what must I do, for I shall have nothing to show?”

I replied, that of all God’s doings, redeeming grace was the most amazing;—that a life of iniquity could, through faith in Christ, be pardoned; that a conscience laden with guilt, could be made the home of peace and joy;—that gray-headed sinners could be made saints;—this far transcended all human conceptions. No doubt we are judged by works, but we are saved by faith. I know you will have little time left to show your faith by your works. You have been saved by the skin of your teeth;—you are a brand plucked from the burning;—you

have been brought into the vineyard at the eleventh hour, but you will have your penny, and for such great mercies you must wonder and adore.

Some time after the preceding events, Wilkins expressed his conviction that he should die suddenly. He thought an affection of the heart had set in, and he desired that, if it were possible, either I or Mr. Molineux should be present at his death. His earnest wish was, that the last words he might speak in this life should be, "Blessed Jesus";—and God, in His goodness, granted him his request. On entering his room on the last day of his life, he smilingly took my hand, and asked me to lift him a little higher. I complied with his request. He then turned his face to the wall, and, in a faint whisper, said, "Blessed Jesus! Blessed Jesus!" While this faint whisper was yet trembling on his lips, the spirit of the converted infidel entered the pearly gates of Paradise, and might there vie with the thief saved on the cross, which of the two should loudest shout the praises of the redeeming love.

—Taken from *Ashworth's Strange Tales*.

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**September 7, 1986**

## **THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM Part 2:**

### **The Humble Spirit of Brotherhood**

Genesis 13:3 And he [Abram] went on his journeys from the south even to Bethel, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Hai,

4 Unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the Lord.

5 And Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents.

6 And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together.

7 And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land.

8 And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren.

9 Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to



the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left.

10 And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar.

11 Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other.

12 Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom.

13 But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly.

14 And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward.

15 For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever.

18 Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the Lord.

**Memory Verse:** While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal. II Corinthians 4:18.

**Central Thought:** Abram proved that his affections were not on things of a material substance when he gave Lot the first choice of which way to go, and was given assurance from God that the land wherein he was a stranger was really his and his seed's forever.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

The sojourn into Egypt had proven to be very profitable for Abram and Lot. Both had many flocks and herds, and were very rich. But, as it is so often, the increase of material wealth brought problems before not known. Abram, in the true spirit of brotherhood, offered to Lot the first choice of the land. He was willing to let his brother have the best so that peace could continue to rest upon their association. And Lot made the mistake of his life. He looked in the wrong direction. Instead of lifting up his heart to God in prayer, he lifted up

his eyes upon the material gain that glittered in the lavish cities of Canaan. He got his eyes on carnal security. He pitched his tent toward Sodom, the city where the wicked and sinful men vaunted themselves in pride before the Lord. As is so often the case, the abundance of material commerce was not taken as a token of God's goodness. Instead it blinded the minds of this people. They should have known better. There were five cities in this fruitful plain of Jordan: Sodom, Gomorrah, Zeboiim, Zoar, and Admah. They were prospering, but drifting farther and farther from the right. A sinner is seeking for happiness and satisfaction from the wrong source. He is seeking it in fleshly gratification and worldly honour. And the more he seeks, the less satisfied he is, which causes him to go farther and deeper, thus becoming worse and worse. Such is the progression of sin and iniquity. Sin is added to sin, and corruption becomes more corrupt. These cities of the plain were fast filling up the cup of iniquity. Even before God was ready to turn the land over to the seed of Abraham, these cities became ripe for destruction. And Lot chose to pitch his tent in their direction. Many today are making the same mistake, pitching their tent toward this world. But let us look at Abraham and behold how much better it is to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and follow the way of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

—Leslie C. Busbee

### **QUESTIONS:**

1. What did Abram do when he got back to the altar he had made first?
2. What problem developed between Abram and Lot?
3. What was the attitude of Abram?
4. What did Lot look at?
5. How did this influence his decision?
6. Towards where did he pitch his tent?
7. What kind of people lived in Sodom?
8. What did the Lord say to Abram after Lot left?
9. Did Abram really lose anything by giving Lot first choice?
10. What was Abram looking for in all of this? What did he have his eye on?

### **ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS**

It never pays to want things merely to please ourselves or the flesh. We get in trouble every time we fail to seek God's guidance and counsel. Oh, Lot made the mistake of his life

when he looked at the carnal security that beckoned him to pitch his tent toward Sodom. It was not very long until he was living in Sodom, as we shall see. Today in this prosperous age, the materialistic gain is still beckoning and alluring souls into the pits of sin and depravity. It does not pay to pitch our tent toward the world. Many do this to their sorrow and often to their eternal loss. Abram knew where his sustenance was coming from. He was relying upon the promises of God to provide for him. One of the most thrilling scenes in the Bible is before us. Lot separated from Abram. He went his way bent on gaining earthly wealth, even though he basically was a righteous man. He was carried away by the sight of prosperity. But look at Abram. Hear the Lord in whom he is putting his trust speaking to him to look in every direction and all around. "All the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever." I can see his countenance light up with joy as he contemplates the glory of God unfolding to his strong eyes of faith. Oh, that people today would have the scales removed from their eyes to see the spiritual realities of holiness, trusting in God, humility, patience, and all the wonderful soul riches that God wants to work in our lives! How people need to seek God, and build their lives as an altar unto Him! While we are looking at the things which are seen, we are going to be affected and drawn away after them. But if we would but turn our eyes away from the outward and dim, we could gaze even now on the presence of Him who lives forever, faithful and true. Let us seek for these eternal riches in Christ now and always.

—Leslie C. Busbee

### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

In this event of Abraham's life, we find that he made a good decision. He easily could have contended with Lot for the best land, but his faith in God envisioned blessings even in what appeared to be the least promising. There was divine providence in this choice, for Abraham was left with the land of Canaan, which was the promised land. The moral of this story is, when making decisions, don't make them to gain short range satisfaction, but make the decision that you will be willing to live with in the future. If Lot could have known that Canaan was to be the land of milk and honey he probably would have chosen differently.

Decisions have a way of coming back to us. Lot chose the best and got in trouble. Abraham took the worst and was

greatly blessed. Once a young man became angry with a neighboring farmer. In his anger he went out and sowed Johnson grass in the neighbor's field. He accomplished his purpose for revenge in that it greatly damaged the field. Not long after that the young man fell in love with the farmer's daughter and they were married. A few years later the farmer died and left the farm to his daughter. The young man said that he fought Johnson grass for thirty years. When we choose the way of righteousness, peace and gentleness, we will never regret it, but if we choose otherwise, it may haunt us for years.

—Wayne Murphey

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**September 14, 1986**

### **THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM Part 3:**

#### **The Promise of An Heir**

Genesis 14:17 And the king of Sodom went out to meet him [Abram] after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer, and of the kings that were with him, . . .

18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine; and he was the priest of the most high God.

19 And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth:

20 And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.

21 And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself.

22 And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth,

23 That I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich:

24 Save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men which went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion.

15:1 After these things the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.

3 And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir.

4 And, behold, the word of the Lord came unto him, say-

ing, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir.

5 And he brought him forth abroad [outside the tent], and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.

6 And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

13 And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years;

14 And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance.

15 And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age.

**Memory Verse:** Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. James 2:23.

**Central Thought:** Because Abram refused the carnal reward of earthly things and trusted solely in God for his reward, God visited him in a special revelation of future blessings and a posterity that were to be as the stars in multitude.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

For twelve years the five cities of the plain, namely, Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Zoar had been under heavy tribute to Chedorlaomer, king of Elam. In the thirteenth year they rebelled, and in the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and other kings came into the land of Canaan, conquering and subduing various peoples. The five kings of the cities of the plain went out against these other kings, and were defeated. Some fell into the slimepits of Siddim, others fled to the mountains, and many, including Abram's nephew, Lot, were carried away captive. The invaders took much food and goods, also. When Abram heard about the terrible plight of his nephew, Lot, he armed his trained servants which numbered three hundred and eighteen, and along with his three confederates, Mamre, Eschol, and Aner, (three brothers) went after them and smote them and pursued them. Josephus said that they smote many of the people in their beds and others were so drunk they could not fight. Anyway, Abram, by the help of God, turned the tide, and recovered all the goods and the people, and brought Lot back, also. Our lesson starts when the

king of Sodom and the king of Salem came out to meet Abram with grateful hearts for his service unto them. Melchizedek, the king of Salem, later named with a priesthood the order of which Christ was made after, blessed Abram, to whom Abram in holy respect for the representative of the most high God, gave a tenth of the spoils. But when the king of Sodom tried to get Abram to take the goods that he had recovered for himself, Abram refused. He made it plain that he had solemnly promised to take nothing of the spoils. This he did in respect to God and his faith. God was pleased with this. He visited Abram soon after with special inspiration and foresight of the future. He literally promised Abram an heir, the fruit of his own body. Abram counted it so, and, as he sacrificed to the Lord as God instructed him to do, he was blessed with comfort and assurance that the future of him and his seed was bright indeed according to the promises given unto him.

—Leslie C. Busbee

#### **QUESTIONS:**

1. Who was Melchizedek?
2. What did he do to Abram?
3. What did Abram do for him?
4. What did the king of Sodom want Abram to do?
5. What was Abram's reply to the king's offer?
6. Why did Abram not choose to take the goods to himself?
7. What did God do in response to Abram's attitude?
8. What was Abram's desire before the Lord?
9. How did God say Abram's seed would be?
10. How did Abram react to God in this promise?
11. What did God say was going to happen to Abram's seed?

#### **ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS**

One of the greatest temptations to a man in this present life is carnal security and material wealth. When a person allows his heart to go out after material gain, he forfeits God's favor and blessings. This is one of the things that Satan uses to draw men and women away from God. It is a passion that must be denied and resisted. The love of money is the root of all evil, which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. I Timothy 6:10. Abram had carried on this war for the sake of his nephew Lot. God blessed and helped him to subdue the enemy and to recover all the goods and the people. When the

king of Sodom offered him as a reward all the goods of the city, Abram refused firmly, having already vowed before God that he would not take any of the goods recovered if it were offered to him. This refusal to be under the snare of earthly love and possessions secured a further reach into the experience with God that had already been working in his life. The Lord said, "I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." God was well pleased with Abram's attitude and action. See Abram creeping outside his tent in response to God's voice, and looking up to the vault of stars above him, while the promise rings in his heart of his future heir! What a blessed thing it is to deny the world and our own desires in preference to God's perfect will! How we have proved this over and over! When we sacrifice our own pleasures for the obedience to God, our reward is that much greater. Abram's faith is progressing onward to a glorious victory. Little by little God is building this man's experience, and Abram is continuing to yield to God, letting Him work His glorious purpose in it all.

—Leslie C. Busbee

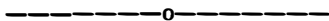
### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Melchizedek, the first priest on record, blessed Abram. He therefore acts in a priestly capacity. This act of Melchizedek is what is so significant as interpreted by the New Testament writer as thus: "For the less is blessed by the better." Abram, in receiving the blessing, admits the superiority of this king-priest. The friend of God, the covenant-head and father of the faithful, has victory granted him over kings, and is thus a type of every true Christian of the Church of God on the earth, while he expresses his faith by obedience and reverence. The key to mystery is, that both of these personages were types of Christ: and their meeting here is significant by the streams of prophecy and promise which rushes onward to the destined consummation.

Melchizedek brought bread and wine when he blessed Abram. Bread and wine had a meaning in the worship service under Moses' laws, and of course we know the meaning of them today as used in the Communion or the Lord's Supper, which is an ordinance in the New Testament. They had a meaning in the hands of Melchizedek, and Abram was welcomed to a share in the sacred sacramental ceremonial, and witnessed to as having a right to that ancient communion of saints. Abram had a part in what the type represented of a

blessing that Jesus Christ, Abram's seed, would bring to the world.

Melchizedek was the type, but Christ was the reality. Christ, as the true Priest still demands the consecration of our worldly substance to His service. —M. Miles



September 21, 1986

### ABRAHAM: THE FATHER OF MANY NATIONS

Genesis 17:1 And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said to him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.

2 And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.

3 And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying,

4 As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations.

5 Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.

6 And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee.

7 And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.

15 And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her Sarai, but Sarah [female chief or noble, mistress, princess, queen] shall her name be.

16 And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her.

17 Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?

18 And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee!

19 And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.

Romans 4:17 (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who



quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.

18 Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be.

19 And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb:

20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God:

21 And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.

22 And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.

**Memory Verse:** Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised. Hebrews 11:11.

**Central Thought:** God led Abraham in his faith step by step, and at last, he was able to grasp the promise of a son through Sarah, his wife, even though he laughed and questioned it when God presented the promise of Isaac to him.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

In our last lesson we saw God bringing His promise a little more explicit and plain to Abraham. Thinking perhaps that one of his servants would be his heir, God corrected his thoughts by assuring him that the promised offspring would be his own. We want to notice the gentle, patient way that God worked with Abraham. Even though Abraham was fully trusting in God, yet the reality of what God wanted to accomplish was very difficult for Abraham to grasp, just as it is with us today. He did not stagger at the promise, but he assured it was not easy to take in very readily. After God's visitation to him, brought out in our previous lesson, something came up that was not very good, but, God bore with the situation and made some good lessons come out of it. It seemed that Sarai, Abram's wife, despaired of her barren condition, and suggested that Abram take her handmaid to wife so that he could obtain children by her. And Abram did so. A little son was born to Hagar from Abram. Problems erupted in the once peaceful home. God had mercy and called Hagar back after she tried to run away, and she came back and became submissive to Sarah. Abram was eighty-five years

old at that time. In our lesson today we find Abram's name being changed to Abraham, which means father of a great multitude or many nations. And then when Abraham offers his puny plea for Ishmael, the son of Hagar, to be the promised seed, God plainly announces that Sarah, his wife, will bear a son unto him. Abraham had fallen on his face and laughed at this thought. Later, when the thought about a son was presented to Sarah, she laughed, also. We usually take it for granted that Abraham had no struggle or difficulty in grasping the promises of God, but our lesson shows up plainly that he did. But God helped him, and Abraham followed on in his faith, overcoming all obstacles, an example and an inspiration to us today who are living by faith in God.

—Leslie C. Busbee

### QUESTIONS:

1. What were the three things that God told Abram when he appeared to him?
2. What did He say that He would make between Abram and Himself?
3. What did He say that Abram would become?
4. What did God change Abram's name to?
5. What did God change Sarai's name to?
6. How did Abraham first respond to God's Word concerning him and Sarah having a son of their own?
7. Why did Abraham refer to Ishmael?
8. Why did God wait for so long in bringing about the promise to Abraham?

### ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

God wants us all to be men and women of faith. He wants us to have faith experiences. He wants to lead every one of us into times when we will stand on His Word alone, with everything else failing around us. He wants us to hold fast to His promise when everything else speaks to the contrary. We are to endure adversity, contrary forces and circumstances that seem to dispute our faith right to our face. If we have the promise of His Word or a special revelation of His personal dealings with us, we are to stand fast regardless of the conditions. Let us keep up with the Lord, like Abraham did. God led him on, step by step, and Abraham kept in pace with the Lord. We are going to see in the final fulfillment of Abraham's faith a like joy and blessing that we saw in the

account of Noah. And this joy and richness will be with every one who trusts fully in God and experiences the trials of faith, which are called more precious than gold in I Peter 1:7. Both Abraham and Sarah laughed at the thought of them having a son in their old age. Isaac was so called because of this laughter. They laughed not because they thought it was funny, but they laughed because the idea of them being parents was ridiculous, impossible, unheard of, and humanly speaking, foolish. But we see them both overcoming their laughter, and receiving strength from God to go forth and receive the promise. Isaac was born, and there was great rejoicing. For twenty-five years Abraham had pressed forth. We today are called upon to be a partaker of this kind of faith. Oh, how else can we really show our love and integrity with God than to trust Him and stand upon His promises?

—Leslie C. Busbee

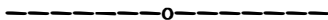
### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The first reaction of Abraham and Sarah to the thought of bearing a child in old age, was a typical response of incredibility. However, after a little consideration, their faith prevailed in a God who had led and performed miracles in their past.

We need a similar faith that will cause us to rest in the promises of God. When John G. Paton, first missionary to the cannibals of the South Sea Islands, was translating the New Testament into their language, he could not find an adequate equivalent for the word faith. One day a runner came into his tent out of breath and, with an exclamation, sank down upon his bamboo couch. Paton leaped to his feet crying, "That's it! That's it!" He asked the native to repeat the word. It meant that the native was casting his weight upon the bamboo couch. Paton said, "That's what faith in Christ is; it means to cast yourself upon Jesus Christ for reconciliation, for forgiveness, for redemption, for peace, and for everlasting life."

Such faith is essential to please God. We must open our hearts and accept this soul saving faith. One woman responding to a man who marvelled at her faith said, "I would give you some to take home with you if you had anything to put it in."

—Wayne Murphey



**September 28, 1986**

**THE ULTIMATE TRYING OF ABRAHAM'S FAITH**

Genesis 22:1 And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham; and he said, Behold, here I am.

2 And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

3 And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave [split] the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him.

4 Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off.

5 And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.

6 And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together.

7 And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?

8 And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.

9 And they came to the place which God had told them of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood.

10 And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.

11 And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I.

12 And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.

13 And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son.

14 And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen.

15 And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time.

16 And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son:

17 That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;

18 And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.

Hebrews 11:17 By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son,

18 Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called:

19 Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure. (parable or similitude).

**Memory Verse:** Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. Galatians 3:16.

**Central Thought:** God gave Abraham one final test of his faith, and Abraham obeyed God and would have literally sacrificed the life of his only son, but was stopped in time with comforting words from God which sealed his faith in God and the future blessings promised to him and to his seed.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

Isaac, the long awaited son of Abraham and Sarah was finally ushered into this life. Abraham was one hundred years old when Isaac was born. Sarah was ninety. Oh, how happy and glad their hearts were, and how dear their child of promise was! Ishmael, Abraham's son with Hagar, the Egyptian handmaid, was seen one day by Sarah mocking her son, Isaac. She immediately demanded that Hagar and Ishmael be cast out, saying, "For the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac." Although this matter was very grievous to Abraham, God backed up Sarah in her demands, and Abraham sent Hagar and her son away. Jose-

Thus says that Isaac was twenty-five years old when Abraham offered him upon the altar. Sarah died about twelve years later at the age of one hundred and twenty-seven. Our lesson is about this last trial of faith that Abraham went through with concerning his son, Isaac. Abraham arose to meet the challenge that this trial offered to him. He wasted no time, nor tarried. His faith was developed that regardless of the opposition and pressure against him he went forth to obey the Lord. It is evident that he had full confidence in the outcome, although seeming to hope against hope. Notice how he told the young men that he and the lad would go yonder and worship and come again. Hear his wise and penetrating words of faith for us today: "The Lord will provide!" It is interesting to note the Lord's confirmation of all that he had ever promised Abraham after stopping him from completing the sacrifice. This time an oath is given. Paul quotes this in Hebrews 6:13, 14, and 17, calling it two immutable (unchanging) things, which we take as being the promise and the oath. This should really stimulate our faith in the trials of life. Regardless of all visible contrary evidence we are standing on the promises of God.

—Leslie C. Busbee

### **QUESTIONS:**

1. How important and valuable is the trial of one's faith?
2. What does the trial of faith accomplish?
3. What was Abraham's reaction to God's command to offer up Isaac?
4. How did Abraham expect this all to come out?
5. Do you suppose that Abraham had any difficulty in doing this relative to his wife Sarah?
6. How far did he go in actually carrying this sacrifice out?
7. How did God respond to Abraham's obedience?
8. Of what value is this to us today?
9. Who else offered up their only begotten son?
10. Is it possible that God might require us to make a like sacrifice?

### **ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS**

This is God's way of proving those who really love and worship Him. If we can obey God to the sacrificing of our dearest joy for His sake, it shows that we really love Him supremely. There was no sin or wrong in the love that Abraham had for Isaac. But this love must be subject to a higher

love, the love for God and His perfect will. Oh, how precious a lesson we have here! The obedience, the faith, and the courage that Abraham shows here is a great help to us today! We just need to strive for this kind of spirit. I can just see Abraham taking the knife, trembling and in tears, no doubt, but resolute in his actions to obey the voice of God. He was fully persuaded that if he did this in obedience to God he would come out in victory, for he knew that God's Word had said that in Isaac would his seed come to be the blessing to the world. And because he obeyed and did not draw back, the promise that he had relied upon became more firm by an oath. God swore by Himself that all would come to pass just as He had promised. In his seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed. Words fail to express the spiritual joys and blessings found in this narrative. There is so much good in this for us today. Do not be dismayed when the times of adversity come against your faith and what you are trusting the Lord for. This is the way God has of perfecting your faith. Abraham's faith was perfected by his obedience here. If he would have drawn back, it would have been failure, defeat, and dishonor to God. Maybe he did not realize how important his obedience was for the future generations who would behold it to their encouragement. How glad we are that Abraham fully obeyed and trusted in his God, becoming the father of us who today are walking by faith and not by sight!—Leslie C. Busbee

## **CONCERNING ISAAC, THE LEGITIMATE SON OF ABRAHAM**

1. Now Abraham greatly loved Isaac, as being his only begotten, and given to him at the borders of old age, by the favour of God. The child also endeared himself to his parents still more, by the exercise of every virtue, and adhering to his duty to his parents, and being zealous in the worship of God. Abraham also placed his own happiness in this prospect, that, when he would die, he should leave this his son in a safe and secure condition; which accordingly he obtained by the will of God: who being desirous to make an experiment of Abraham's religious disposition towards himself, appeared to him, and enumerated all the blessings he had bestowed on him; how he had made him superior to his enemies; and that his son Isaac, who was the principal part of his present happiness, was derived from him; and he said that he required this son of his as a sacrifice and holy oblation. Accordingly He commanded him to carry him to the mountain Moriah, and to build an

altar, and offer him for a burnt-offering upon it; for that this would best manifest his religious disposition towards him, if he preferred what was pleasing to God, before the preservation of his own son.

2. Now Abraham thought that it was not right to disobey God in any thing, but that he was obliged to serve him in every circumstance of life, since all creatures that live enjoy their life by his providence, and the kindness he bestows on them. Accordingly he concealed this command of God, and his own intentions about the slaughter of his son, from his wife, as also from every one of his servants, otherwise he should have been hindered from his obedience to God; and he took Isaac, together with two of his servants, and laying what things were necessary for a sacrifice upon an ass, he went away to the mountain. Now the two servants went along with him two days; but on the third day, as soon as he saw the mountain, he left those servants that were with him till then in the plain, and, having his son alone with him, he came to the mountain. It was that mountain upon which king David afterwards built the temple. Now they had brought with them every thing necessary for a sacrifice, excepting the animal that was to be offered only. Now Isaac was twenty-five years old. And as he was building the altar, he asked his father what he was about to offer, since there was no animal there for an oblation:—to which it was answered, “That God would provide himself an oblation, he being able to make a plentiful provision for men out of what they have not, and to deprive others of what they already have, when they put too much trust therein; that therefore, if God pleased to be present and propitious at this sacrifice, he would provide himself an oblation.”

3. As soon as the altar was prepared, and Abraham had laid on the wood, and all things were entirely ready, he said to his son, “O son, I poured out a vast number of prayers that I might have thee for my son; when thou wast come into the world, there was nothing that could contribute to thy support for which I was not greatly solicitous, nor any thing wherein I thought myself happier than to see thee grown up to man’s estate, and that I might leave thee at my death the successor to my dominion; but since it was by God’s will that I became thy father, and it is now his will that I relinquish thee, bear this consecration to God with a generous mind; for I resign thee up to God who has thought fit now to require this testimony of honour to himself, on account of the favours he



hath conferred on me, in being to me a supporter and defender. Accordingly thou, my son, wilt now die, not in any common way of going out of the world, but sent to God, the Father of all men, beforehand, by thy own father, in the nature of a sacrifice. I suppose he thinks thee worthy to get clear of this world neither by disease, neither by war, nor by any other severe way, by which death usually comes upon men, but so that he will receive thy soul with prayers and holy offices of religion, and will place thee near to himself, and thou wilt there be to me a succourer and supporter in my old age; on which account I principally brought thee up, and thou wilt thereby procure me God for my Comforter instead of thyself."

4. Now Isaac was of such a generous disposition as became the son of such a father, and was pleased with this discourse; and said, "That he was not worthy to be born at first, if he should reject the determination of God and of his father, and should not resign himself up readily to both their pleasures; since it would have been unjust if he had not obeyed, even if his father alone had so resolved." So he went immediately to the altar to be sacrificed. And the deed had been done if God had not opposed it; for he called loudly to Abraham by his name, and forbade him to slay his son; and said, "It was not out of a desire of human blood that he was commanded to slay his son, nor was he willing that he should be taken away from him whom he had made his father, but to try the temper of his mind, whether he would be obedient to such a command. Since therefore he now was satisfied as to that his alacrity, and the surprising readiness he showed in this his piety, he was delighted in having bestowed such blessings upon him; and that he would not be wanting in all sort of concern about him, and in bestowing other children upon him; and that his son should live to a very great age; that he should live a happy life, and bequeath a large principality to his children, who should be good and legitimate." He foretold also, that his family should increase into many nations; and that those patriarchs should leave behind them an everlasting name; that they should obtain the possession of the land of Canaan, and be envied by all men. When God had said this, he produced to them a ram, which did not appear before, for the sacrifice. So Abraham and Isaac receiving each other unexpectedly, and having obtained the promises of such great blessings, embraced one another; and when they had sacrificed, they returned to Sarah, and lived happily together, God affording them His assistance in all things they desired

(Taken from Josephus.)

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